DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 326 377 RC 017 967

TITLE What's Distinctive about the Migrant Education Program. A Report of Survey Results of the Interstate Migrant Education Council.
INSTITUTION Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colo.
REPORT NO TAC-B-66
PUB DATE Mar 86
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; Access to Information; *Administrative Policy; Cooperative Programs; Coordination; *Educationally Disadvantaged; Elementary Secondary Education; English (Second Language); Family Characteristics; Information Transfer; Limited English Speaking; *Migrant Education; Migrant Programs; Mobility; Parent Participation; Program Evaluation; Student Needs

ABSTRACT

A study by J. Bertoglio (1985) on the origins and history of the Migrant Education Program served as a frame of reference for a telephone survey of 15 state Directors of Migrant Education and other experts conducted in 1986. The general goal of the survey was to collect information on distinctive features of migrant education programs at the national, state, and local levels. The survey identified past programs that in the views of the respondents were useful or have met unique needs of the migrant population. Three general questions were asked in each interview: (1) What innovative approaches or noteworthy changes have been made in migrant education to enable people to meet the needs of this student population? (2) What noteworthy programs at the national level (interstate programs) that meet unique educational needs of students can you identify? and (3) What noteworthy programs in states that meet unique needs of students can you identify? This report presents the survey outcomes in five categories: (1) Family Characteristics; (2) Student Characteristics; (3) Administrative Modifications; (4) Information Exchange; and (5) Program Characteristics. Additionally, a summary is provided of respondent's comments regarding major pluses of the program, major unique features, and perceived needs and concerns, along with a list of noteworthy programs. An appendix lists names and titles of interviewers. (GGH)

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Draft - March 1986

WHAT'S DISTINCTIVE ABOUT THE MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM

A Report of Survey Results of
The Interstate Migrant Education Council
A Special Project of the
Education Commission of the States
1860 Lincoln Street, Suite 300
Denver, CO 80295

Congressman William D. Ford, Chairman

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Introduction

On reflection, commemorating the Twentieth Anniversary of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and Congress' subsequent inclusion of migrant children via passage of amendments to Public Law 89-10 and enactment of Public Law 89-750, Bertoglio[1] identified several noteworthy differences of the migrant population that made the program possible. There was no question at that time as to whether the population met the criteria of disadvantaged. But what else distinguished migrants from other students? Bertoglio cites six major differences that made the Migrant Education Program a necessity.

1. Migrant students had a high incidence of mobility;
2. They were looked upon by school districts as non-resident children and as such, not their responsibility;
3. The regular school year with its 183 days and related time-span curriculum did not accommodate short-span units of instruction for limited attendance, non-resident migrant students;
4. There was no continuity of instruction from school district to school district, much less from state to state as the students migrated;
5. There were no records nor means by which to transfer academic and health information while the migrant students are on the move. In addition, there was no system for the transfer of secondary school credits for accrual to meet graduation requirements; and
6. There was a need to take into consideration the erratic cycle of agricultural activity and subsequent school attendance in determining the entitlement entity (SEA vis-a-vis LEA). The question was at which level would maximum flexibility for shifting funds be most feasible in order for the money to follow the child.

In relating the 20-year history of the program, Bertoglio identified several developments and approaches aimed at solving some of the persistent differences of the population that have evolved over the years. Included on his list of such changes are the following:

- Development and implementation of the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS).
- Cooperation between education and medical communities in development of MSRTS medical records and provision of health services.

[1] Bertoglio, J. Current Strengths in Chapter 1 and Approaches to Resolving Persistent Problems, in A Compilation of Papers on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education, Serial #99D, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1985.

- Development of the MSRTS Skills Information System.
- Development and implementation of a secondary credit exchange system.
- Initiation of Learn and Earn programs for students who are not college bound and those who drop out of school.
- Development of short-term units (6 weeks) of instruction to accommodate the short school attendance span and individual student needs.
- Development of a variety of instructional materials and methodologies to address the needs of limited English speaking students.
- Use of a variety of models for meaningful parental involvement.
- High School Equivalency Programs (HEP) in operation for purposes of addressing the high incidence of school dropouts within the migrant student community.
- Operation of College Assistance Migrant Programs (CAMP) for purposes of identifying, recruiting and enrolling migrant high school graduates, with the desire and academic potential, in post-secondary education.
- Summer school programs offering a complete gamut of instructional courses and services to allow students to catch up or make up course work missed as a result of migration. These programs run from 8 weeks to 3 months in duration. Some include evening classes to accommodate older students who must work in the fields during the day.
- Individualized instruction is now the rule as a result of smaller teacher/pupil ratios and additional human resources (aides) in the classroom in addition to supplies and equipment necessary for development and implementation of new materials and approaches (innovation).

The foregoing represents the perspectives of a Department official who has been intimately involved in numerous capacities with the migrant program since its inception. Mr. Bertoglio's remarks have been included here as a means of introducing the outcomes of a telephone survey conducted among 15 State Directors of Migrant Education and other knowledgeable people concerning current views of the program. In a post facto sense, it was interesting to find that many of the comments made by the survey sample matched or paralleled those made by Bertoglio.

The approach used in the telephone survey conducted during the period February 24-March 4, 1986 and its outcomes are reported below.

Purpose and Approach

The general goal of the survey was to confer with individuals who had practical, hands on experience in migrant education to identify unique features of the program. Specifically, the interviews sought to obtain information from the people contacted regarding distinctive or unique features about migrant education at the national (federal), state and local levels. Additionally, the survey sought to identify ongoing or past programs that stand out in the views of those interviewed as being extremely useful or which have met unique needs of the migrant population.

Three general questions were asked in each interview. They were:

1. What innovative approaches/noteworthy changes have been made (for example in administration, program, delivery or other areas) in migrant education to enable people to more effectively meet the needs of this student population?

2. Can you identify any noteworthy programs at the national (interstate programs) that meet the education needs of migrant students?

3. Can you identify any noteworthy programs in states that meet unique education needs of migrant students?

A total of 17 telephone interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted during the time period noted. The average length of the interviews was 10 minutes with a range of 5 to 15 minutes. A substantial amount of information was gathered during this process. The information was comprised mainly of brief comments and then grouped into general categories viz. population specific, student specific, administration, program (curriculum), delivery, scheduling (calendar) items.

The results of the telephone survey are reported in the next section. It should be noted that there are several limitations in the results reported in this survey.

First, the survey included only representatives of the 15 member states of the Interstate Migrant Education Council (IMEC) who volunteered the information.

Second, the survey was not intended to be scientific rather it was conducted to help IMEC in the identification of noteworthy differences and trends in migrant education for use in interstate sharing of inforamtion.

Results

The outcomes of the survey interviews, as noted in the previous section, were grouped into five general categories for reporting purposes. These categories have been arranged below to assist the reader in understanding the migrant population and modifications or adaptations which program participants deem important in the education of migrant students. The results are presented below.

Family Characteristics

Three major themes are evident with respect to respondents' comments concerning the overall migrant population. Foremost, in terms of the descriptors relating to the population, is the mobile life style of the family. Frequent terms used to convey this aspect of the population include comments about the wide dispersal of the families, the changing dynamics of the work force as people leave migrant work and new workers and families enter that labor group, the unpredictable movement of the labor force, and the temporary status of families as they move between and within states.

A second major category of characteristics attributed to the population centered on the multiple needs of the migrant family. In particular, the respondents mentioned the economic, health, dental, housing, dangerous working conditions (accidents and exposure to pesticides) as continuing needs. Additional attendant chronic needs descriptors of the population include low socioeconomic status, language differences and seasonal employment.

The third general characteristic of the population falls under the category of political leverage. Due largely to several factors . . . mobility, wide dispersal, little cohesiveness, temporary residency, the influx of alien members into the work force, the interstate travel . . . the population is largely unstable and therefore is perceived to have an unfair disadvantage in the political arena. In effect, over the years advocates for migrant concerns at the state and national levels have come from a cadre of social service agencies, churches and civic organizations. Additionally, a significant group involved in advocacy for the migrant population, particularly at the federal level, has been State Directors of Migrant Education and health sector practitioners involved in the migrant health program. It has been shown, nevertheless, that migrant parents are extremely capable, when given the opportunity via parent advisory committees and other vehicles, of voicing their opinions, providing leadership and constructive criticism, and self determination. Historical evidence of such involvement can be found in the California boycotts accomplished by Cesar Chavez, as well as the active parent involvement committees of many states' migrant education and health programs.

Student Characteristics

Many of the student characteristics identified parallel those also attributable to the overall family, e.g., low income, disadvantaged; however, several additional problems can be identified from an education standpoint. Among the characteristics identified by the respondents throughout the interviews were the linguistic needs of the students. The migrant student is oftentimes Spanish dominant or linguistically different, e.g., Indochinese, Japanese or Eskimo, of limited English proficiency and bicultural. The state of Alaska, for example, has several native Alaskan groups (Eskimo, Aleut, Indian) who speak at least six different languages. Oregon has numerous Russian Old Believer students who speak Russian; Louisiana and other states have experienced an influx of Indochinese who are part of the migrant labor force and whose children speak languages other than English. California has always had a large Chinese and Japanese population and many are involved in migrant agricultural or fishing industries.

Another major feature described by the survey respondents can be categorized as educational disadvantage. Descriptors which convey this notion include comments relating to students oftentimes being below grade level, low level of literacy, limited experiential background. Concerns for the multiple support needs of the students including health, clothing, dental and nutritional services received significant comment.

Accompanying concepts which generally characterize migrant students and can be viewed as part of the total complex of the migrant life style are irregular student movement, lack of continuity in the student's education program and the temporary and frequently unpredictable nature of the student's participation in a given school. Table I summarizes the major unique family-student characteristics identified in this survey.

Table I

Summary of Unique Population-Student Characteristics

- widely dispersed
- changing dynamics of the population
- undefined streams, movement all over the country
- multiple needs
- interstate/intrastate movement
- little political cohesiveness and clout
- temporary
- bilingual/bicultural
- limited English Proficiency
- linguistic differences
- irregular student movement
- students below grade level
- lack of continuity
- multiple needs - e.g., academic, health
- need for nursery and preschool
- need for second language learning
- education disadvantages
- low experiential background
- low literacy
- low income
- not well defined family unit

Administrative Modifications

Given the nature of the student population the migrant education program has implemented modifications to traditional administrative structures over the years to enable the program to more effectively meet student needs. Key concepts which have distinguished the program since its inception and which comprised a preponderance of comments obtained in this survey are the need for administrative flexibility and innovation. There is an obvious need, as well, to maximize coordination between and among the various structures administering the program, i.e., federal, state and local. The concept of cooperation is also significant in administration of the program as personnel must be willing to share information with a vast array of service providers, among districts, among states and from school to school to mention a few.

A major subset of the four general concepts mentioned above (flexibility, innovation, coordination, cooperation) includes several considerations in the area of information exchange.

Information Exchange

Several facets of the migrant student population make recordkeeping, information storage, information exchange a program necessity. By law, for example, the Migrant Education Program is required to update and validate a student's status on an annual basis. Each state that serves a migrant student must complete a certificate of eligibility and transmit the information to the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) in Little Rock, Arkansas. This information is compiled on an annual basis and student FTEs (full time equivalencies) are then conveyed to the Education Department (USED) for funding purposes.

Recognition then for regular information exchange concerning migrant students is spawned at the federal level via the ECIA Chapter I law and regulations designed to implement the law. There are additional information exchange demands in the program from an administrative standpoint attributable to the mutual sharing of a student(s) by two or more districts and states. Considerations mentioned frequently in this area cite the need to keep track of the students, to update and maintain reliable data, to convey important student information from one district to another, and finally, to insure immediate and accurate placement of a student in the educational program.

The mechanisms that have evolved over the years to address the information demands include the centerpiece of the migrant program, the MSRTS, plus a variety of cooperative, interstate projects aimed at specific portions of service for migrant students.

At the national level, for example, the State Directors of Migrant Education confer on a regular basis via meetings of the National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education (NASDME). Additionally, the Education Commission of the States' Interstate Migrant Education Council has served as a vehicle for stimulating interstate/interagency cooperation at the national level since 1976. The HEP/CAMP serves to enhance communication among secondary/postsecondary programs on a regular basis.

Methods of ensuring communication regarding student progress and thereby enhancing continuity, have been developed via the NASDME-MSRTS Skills Information System. Other efforts at the secondary level are credit accrual and exchange programs which serve to help migrant students earn required credits for graduation purposes.

Common themes which cut across all administrative concerns in the migrant education program are:

- the need to maximize communication
- the need to share information on a regular basis
- provision of opportunities for interstate, intrastate information sharing and training
- the need to maintain accurate and updated records

In addition to the inter/intrastate programs which have evolved as a result of the need to share information, the migrant program has placed a high priority on training. A wide range of personnel participate in the program including representatives from health, counseling, special regular and bilingual education, and teacher aides among others. Because of the wide range of service providers involved, many of whom erroneously perceive migrants as illegal aliens or immigrant workers, there is a continuing need to inform people. Furthermore, few teacher training programs in the country have anything in the curriculum regarding the education needs of migrant students. A consequence of this lack of knowledgeable people, as noted, then places a higher burden on administrators to conduct ongoing staff training programs.

It is evident from the vast array of administrative and program modifications necessary that flexibility and a willingness to be innovative are prerequisites to meeting migrant students' needs. Some of the most often mentioned characteristics are summarized in Table II.

Table II

Summary of Unique Administrative Characteristics

- Planned coordination and cooperation with:
  - multiple administrative levels
  - multiple support agencies
  - between districts within a state (intrastate)
  - among districts in other states (interstate)
  - multiple service providers (e.g., health, housing, etc.)
- Information sharing and exchange
- Ongoing recordkeeping and data collection
- Ongoing outreach (identification and recruitment)
- Utilization of technology and communication for data storage and transfer, e.g., MSRTS
- Ongoing staff training and awareness building
- Extensive parent involvement
- Maintenance of student continuity
- Formation of interstate compacts

Program Characteristics

Changes in five general areas are evident in the overall design and delivery of program services to migrant students. These areas include flexibility in scheduling, location, parent participation, use of technology and curriculum. Each of these features is discussed below.

Scheduling

Due to the mobility of the student population, the unpredictable pattern of their arrival and departure, plus the nature of the parents' work schedule (oftentimes dawn until dark) migrant programs must make adjustments in scheduling. The primary concern of programs, particularly in receiving states which have the students for short periods of time (one to eight weeks) is to make a high impact in a short time span.

A variety of time schedules are used to accommodate migrant students including: extended day, summer school and night classes. Another approach used in some districts is to take the program to the migrant camps and schedule instruction and activities when the children are available.

Location

As in scheduling, the migrant education program uses a variety of settings to work with students. The settings range from use of the local school building to church social halls, community centers and in some cases converted farm houses. Migrant personnel may also be required to use some instructional time at swimming pools where children are taught water safety or in the fields where field sanitation and pesticide dangers may be taught.

Some states use a combination of settings as described or a service center approach which serves as the central network for provision of services, including education. In such cases, it is not cost effective to have personnel in every district because some districts are so small. The service center maintains teaching personnel who are assigned to work in the districts during periods of "high impact". That is, aides and other personnel may be assigned to assist in a given school and serve other schools as well on a floating basis. Such centers also perform outreach, data collection, materials storage and related functions.

Parent Participation

The need to involve migrant parents in an active fashion in the overall education of their children was recognized since the program's inception in 1966. Since that time states have been required through the regulations to maintain state and local parent advisory councils (PAC). Such councils are instrumental in providing input to the design of the state plan and are involved in reviewing the overall implementation of the program. The degree of involvement of parent groups varies, however, between sending and receiving states. Sending states, California, Texas and Florida have migrants for longer periods of time and are therefore able to maintain a higher degree of stability in their parent advisory groups. Receiving states, conversely, have migrants for variable time periods and it is much more difficult to maintain continously active parent groups.

Another facet of the migrant program which demands regular communication with parents is the requirement related to annual documentation of a student's migrant status. Programs are required to complete certificates of eligibility, update enrollment information and verify every student's participation in each district during the school year. Part of the rationale for this is to record all of the information in the MSRTS which then computes full time equivalencies (FTEs) for each state. The FTEs are then used to compute Chapter I funding. One outcome of this procedure is that the migrant education program must have personnel involved on an ongoing basis in identification, recruitment and recordkeeping. Because

of these needs the migrant program conducts regular communication with parents wherever and whenever they can be found.

Technology and Communications

Migrant educators have, because of the extensive range of information needs and requisite sharing of information among multiple entities, pioneered the use of computer technology in education. Via the MSRTS, which has been used for management and reporting purposes, migrant programs form an interconnecting network in 49 states and Puerto Rico. In 1985, for example, there were over 2.5 million data entries on over 530,064 students representing 441,375 FTEs nationwide. Pertinent student information including academic, health and related data is recorded on each student's MSRTS record on an ongoing basis. Additionally, because of changes in technology, equipment, or procedures, MSRTS conducts regular training sessions throughout the nation.

The high degree of familiarity with computers also enabled many migrant programs at the state and local levels to install computers for both management (management information systems) and instruction (computer assisted instruction) long before it became fashionable to do so. Some states are now designing local-state-MSRTS networks which will help schools and teachers access (and provide) information on a more immediate basis.

Curriculum

Given the broad spectrum of student needs, the cultural and linguistic diversity, the varying geographic distribution, plus the broad range of academic capabilities of the population one single education template can not be prescribed for all. There are, nevertheless, some distinctive features nationwide which are identifiable. Included in the list are:

- Supplementary help in oral language, math and reading
- Bilingual-bicultural programs
- English as a second language instruction
- Teaching related skills, e.g., critical thinking, art, swimming, pesticide/health awareness

The primary method of intervention used in the program is the teacher aide who works in a variety of capacities, e.g., with the regular classroom teacher, on a pull-out basis, to monitor peer tutors and so forth. The program is individualized and needs-based and frequently uses structured tutoring or one-to-one instruction. At the secondary level a variety of techniques are also in use including work study, independent study, and correspondence courses.

Summary

The preceding sections have attempted to give a current perspective of the migrant education program as viewed by the respondents to this telephone survey. A wealth of information was gathered and the highlights and common features have been pointed out in this text. The areas mentioned constitute the technical and programmatic elements of the program. Additionally, an interesting sampling of comments was obtained from the respondents regarding major pluses of the program, major unique features, concerns and noteworthy programs. These listings are presented below:

Major Pluses of the Migrant Education Program

- It has given identification to a population previously invisible. Visibility and attention.
- The program has offered a connection for kids and parents with classroom teachers via recordkeeping, etc.
- The program provides assurance to parents that their children's needs are being met.
- Migrant parents and students have something to look forward to when they leave home or are returning to their home school.
- Provides an alternative to parents for removal of students from camps/fields in the summer.
- The program's emphasis at the secondary level has seen the dropout rate decrease dramatically.
- Migrant education pioneered use of technology, especially computers for migrant and CAI.
- The program approaches the child as a whole.
- The program encourages teachers to share student records at a very personal level.
- The program has created greater parent awareness of the need to keep their children in school.

Major Unique Features

- Requires outreach - canvassing various geographic areas to find the students.

- The program has attacked the problem of language differences in a very positive way--by raising the awareness and looking at children's needs from preschool to secondary.

- Provision of a summer school program which helps to achieve the following:

  - sustain student gains
  - remove students from dangerous pesticides, cars, sun
  - provides learning environment, as opposed to the environment of fields-camps

- The program's major emphasis on parent involvement has helped to teach parents the importance of getting involved in the education process and settling out. Settled out number is indicator of success.

- Many good teachers are attracted to migrant education because of opportunity for innovation.

- It is one of the few federal entitlement programs in which the State Department of Education plays an active role in administration and implementation of the program as opposed to other programs in which the State Department of Education "flows" the money to local districts.

Concerns

There is a need:

- to make better use of MSRTS, not only for FTE purposes
- to take a closer look at active migrant students, especially their health needs
- for a closer look at the dropout problem
- for a national diploma
- to involve business and industry
- for greater public awareness
- for better evaluation data
- for interest in early childhood
- for equal emphasis on secondary students
- for more home visitors
- for more uniform definitions and agency cooperation
- for more uniform federal USED audit guidelines
- for a national certificate of eligibility

Noteworthy National-State-Regional Programs

- CAPR/CAPM
- CARE
- DAMAS
- DISNET
- Escape
- HAPPIER
- International Coordination Re International Barriers
- Interstate High School (Texas-Washington) Credit Exchange/Accrual
- Louisiana Identification and Recruitment Project
- MEMO Newsletter
- MSRTS
- MSRTS Master Teacher Program
- MSRTS Skills List (NASDME)
- Migrant Dropout Model
- Migrant Parent Resource Center
- Migrant Youth Leadership Conference
- Mini Corps
- Mississippi Resource Center
- National Migrant Special Education Center
- New York Goals for Youth
- New York Pre-school Program
- New York Reading Program
- Ohio Scholarship Program
- Oregon Special Education Project
- PASS
- TEACH
- Texas-Corpus Christi Dropout Project
- Texas Counselor Program
- Texas Idnetification of Exemplary Migrant Students
- Texas Secondary Credit Exchange
- Washington State Pre-school/Bilingual Project
- Washington-Texas Preidentification and Recruitment
- Western Secondary Credit Exchange Program

Appendix A

Members of the Interstate Migrant Education Council Steering Committee Contacted in Telephone Survey

Ronald Bedard, Administrator, Office of Supplemental Programs, Alaska State Department of Education

J. O. Maynes, Jr., Director, Migrant Child Education, Arizona State Department of Education

Homer Neal, Supervisor, Migrant Education Program, Arkansas State Department of Education

Jack Schaeffer, Director of Migrant Education, California State Department of Public Instruction

Cecil Carlton, Jr., Chief, Bureau of Compensatory Education, Florida State Department of Education

Ronnie Glover, Director, Bureau of Migrant Education, Louisiana State Department of Education

Daniel McAllister, Director, Massachusetts Migrant Education Program, Massachusetts State Department of Education

Cecilia Santa Ana, Supervisor of Migrant Education, Michigan State Department of Education

Peter Moreno, Supervisor, Migrant Education, Minnesota State Department of Education

Richard Bove, Chief, Bureau of Migrant Education, New York State Education Department

Robert Youngblood, Assistant Director, Migrant Education, Division of Support Programs, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction

Jose Garcia, Specialist, Migrant Education Program, Oregon State Department of Public Instruction

Manuel Recio, Director, Migrant Education, Pennsylvania State Department of Education

Frank Contreras, Director, Division of Special Programs, Texas Education Agency

Raul de la Rosa, Director, Supplemental Education Programs, Washington State Department of Public Instruction

Louis McGuinness, Director, Division of Program Operations, U. S. Education Department

Joe Miller, Director, Migrant Student Record Transfer System, Arkansas State Department of Education

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Date Filmed

March 29, 1991